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ABSTRACT

Examined was the ability of parents of 12 deviant and 12 nondeviant boys, age 4-8 years, to bias home observation data by influencing their child's behavior in socially desirable and undesirable directions. The parents were given the response set to present their child as "good", "bad", and usual (normal) during six 45-minute observations of family interaction. Nondeviant children showed slightly less deviant behavior under the "good" condition and significantly more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition as compared to normal. Deviant children showed significantly more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition whereas their normal and "good" conditions did not differ. Parent positive, negative, and commanding behaviors were significantly related to changes in child deviant behavior for the nondeviant sample, whereas only parent negative behaviors were related to deviant behavior change for the deviant sample. Parent self-report of behavior change was consistent with the observation data except the deviant parents tended to overestimate their changes. The results were consistent with previous research on the unresponsiveness of deviant children to adult-dispensed stimuli. In addition, the present investigation suggested some modifications in the methodology of naturalistic observations of families. (Author)

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PARENTAL MANIPULATION OF THE BEHAVIOR OF NORMAL AND DEVIANT CHILDREN

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Abstract

The present study examined the ability of parents to bias home observation data by influencing their child's behavior in socially desirable and undesirable directions. Parents of twelve deviant and twelve nondeviant boys, age 4-8, were given the response set to present their child as "good," "bad," and usual (normal) during six 45-minute observations of family interaction. Nondeviant children showed slightly less deviant behavior under the "good" condition and significantly more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition as compared to normal. Deviant children showed significantly more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition whereas their normal and "good" conditions did not differ. Parent positive, negative, and commanding behaviors were significantly related to changes in child deviant behavior for the nodeviant sample, whereas only parent negative behaviors were related to deviant behavior change for the deviant sample. Parent self-report of behavior change was consistent with the observation data except the deviant parents tended to overestimate their changes. The results were consistent with previous research on the unresponsiveness of deviant children to adult-dispensed stimuli. In addition, the present investigation suggested some modifications in the methodology of naturalistic observations of families.

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PARENTAL MANIPULATION OF THE BEHAVIOR OF NORMAL AND DEVIANT CHILDREN[1]

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Systematic observation of children in naturalistic settings has recently become the principal means of data collection, not only for the evaluation of treatment programs (e.g., Eyberg & Johnson, 1974; Herbert & Baer, 1972; Patterson, Cobb, & Ray, 1973; Patterson & Reid, 1973), but also for theoretical formulations and basic social research (e.g., Baumrind, 1967; Johnson, Wahl, Johansson, & Martin, 1973; Patterson & Cobb, 1971, 1973; Patterson & Reid, 1970; Raush, 1965). This reliance on data collected through naturalistic observation is partly due to the presumed validity of naturalistic methods.

Observational data collected in the natural setting are ostensibly a sample of the subject's unbiased behaviors. Yet, considerable discrepancy between the subject's unbiased behavior and the observed behavior may result from a variety of methodological problems inherent in naturalistic observation. As Johnson and Bolstad (1973) have suggested, according to the standards employed in traditional assessment methodology, much behavior modification data is subject to observer bias, subject reactivity, demand characteristics, response sets, and instrument decay. In particular, any response set on the part of the subject may contribute to data distortion. For example, in a home observation study of nondeviant children, Lytton (1973) reported that observers' believed that parents were trying to be "good parents," thus biasing the data. Obviously, any such biasing in either

a socially desirable or undesirable direction could confound the results of treatment outcome studies or descriptive investigations employing observational data.

The susceptibility of traditional assessment methods to subject response sets is well known. Given a response set to appear "desirable" or "deviant" on projective tests and personality inventories, subjects have been able to present a false impression of their behavior and personality (Anthony, 1971; Braun, 1967; Canter, 1963; Carp & Shavzin, 1950; Feldman & Graley, 1954; Grayson & Olinger, 1957; Kaplan & Eron, 1965; Weisskopf & Dieppa, 1951). On the other hand, where naturalistic observation of families is the method of assessment, "naturally occurring situations [may] often, willy-nilly, bring out parents' natural reaction...a factor that contributes considerably to a reduction of distortion" (Lytton, 1973, p. 17). Furthermore, even though parents may wish to bias their own behavior in socially desirable or undesirable directions, they may not be able to manipulate their child's behavior. The present study examined a) the degree to which parents changed their own behavior and b) the degree to which they could manipulate their child's behavior in response to socially desirable and undesirable response sets during naturalistic observations.

In a study previewing the present investigation, Johnson and Lobitz (1974) presented evidence that parents of nondeviant children can cause their children to appear "deviant" or "desirable" depending on their response set. Twelve sets of parents with four- to six-year old nondeviant children were instructed to try to make their children look "good" and "bad" on alternate days of a six-day home observation. The investigators found a) a higher rate of deviant behaviors for the target child, b) more "negative" responses

on the part of parents, and c) more parental commands on "good" days than on "bad" days.

Although this study established the potential for parents to bias naturalistic observations, two problems restrict the interpretation and limit the generalizability of the results. First, the observation of significant differences in deviant behavior between "good" and "bad" days established the effect of the manipulation but did not indicate the direction of change caused by the manipulation. The question remained as to whether this observed difference was a function of change from normal to "bad" or from normal to "good" or both.

Second, the generalizability of Johnson and Lobitz's (1974) results was limited to nondeviant families. There is evidence to suggest that one distinction between children labeled "deviant" and nondeviant may lie in the parents' ability to control their child's behavior either because of differences in the parents' behavior, the child's responses, or both. Shepherd, Oppenheim, and Mitchell (1966) found that children referred to child guidance clinics did not differ from matched nonreferred children in severity of disturbance. However, the parents of referred children were found to be significantly more puzzled and helpless about coping with their child's behavior problems than were the parents of nonreferred children. Similarly, in describing a typology of parents of behavior problem children, Patterson, Cobb, and Ray (1973) hypothesized that these parents do not monitor and/or do not appropriately consequate their child's behavior. For example, during home observations parents of behavior problem children have been found to provide attention at least as much for deviant behavior as for nondeviant behavior (Herbert & Baer, 1972; Wahler, 1969). As clinical investigations

have demonstrated, changes in the parents' consequation have led to changes in the child's problem behavior (e.g., Herbert & Baer, 1972; Patterson et al.,1973; Patterson & Reid, 1973).

On the other hand, the distinction between deviant and nondeviant children may lie in their response to social stimuli. In laboratory analogue studies, children labeled "deviant" have been less responsive than nondeviant controls when adult verbal approval or disapproval has been used as reinforcement (Levine & Simmons, 1962; Patterson & Fagot, 1967). In clinical treatment studies, deviant children were unresponsive to adult-dispensed positive social stimuli (Patterson, 1965; Patterson, Hawkins, McNeal, & Phelps, 1967; Phillips, 1968; Wahler, 1969). Similarly, deviant children were found to respond more negatively to negative social stimuli than were nondeviant children. Raush (1965) has used a Markov chain to predict the reciprocity in a hostile peer interaction. He found that deviant children reciprocated hostility at a rate greater than predicted, whereas the nondeviant children's hostility was less reciprocal than predicted. In a home observation study, Sallows (1972) found that the probability of a deviant behavior recurring given a negative response by a parent was four times greater for deviant than for nondeviant children.

Because deviant parents may not have the skills to appropriately consequate behavior and because deviant children may be less responsive to positive social stimuli, parents of deviant children were not expected to be able to influence their child to appear "desirable," whereas parents of nondeviant children were. On the other hand, since both deviant and nondeviant children tend to reciprocate negative social stimuli, parents of both groups were expected to be able to influence their children to appear "undesirable."

In the present study the following four predictions were made within a paradigm in which the parents of deviant and nondeviant boys were given the response set to make their child appear alternately "desirable" ("good"), "undesirable" ("bad"), or to treat him "as usual" (normal control condition). a) Nondeviant children would show significantly more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition and less deviant behavior under the "good" condition as compared to the normal condition. b) Deviant children would show significantly more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition as compared to the normal condition, whereas the "good" and normal conditions would not differ significantly. c) A significant interaction would exist between families (deviant--nondeviant) and the "desirable" experimental conditions ("good"--normal) wherein nondeviant children would show a greater reduction in deviant behavior from the normal condition to the "good" condition than would the deviant children. d) Both groups would show more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition as compared to the "good" condition. The first three predictions test the hypothesis that nondeviant families can influence their children to behave both better and worse than usual, whereas deviant families can only influence their children to behave worse. The fourth prediction states that Johnson and Lobitz's (1974) results would be replicated on deviant as well as nondeviant populations.

In addition to the above predictions about the child's behavior, it was hypothesized that to bias the observations in accordance with their responses, parents would vary their negativeness and the number of commands they gave. Previous research has indicated that over-all parent negativeness and child deviant behavior correlate highly (r = .78, Johnson et al., 1973), as do parent commands and child deviant behavior (r = .66, Lobitz & Johnson,

1973). Thus, the relationships in hypotheses a to d were also predicted for the dependent variables parent negativeness and parent commands.

Method

Subjects

Twenty-four subject families were recruited from the Eugene-Springfield, Oregon community through newspaper advertising. Interested families were accepted into the subject pool if they had a male child between the age of 4.0 and 8.0 and both parents were living in the home. Families were paid $20.00 for participation in the study.

Recruited families were assigned to either the Deviant or Nondeviant sample. For assignment to the Deviant sample, families had to meet at least one of the following criteria: a) the target child had a history of referral to community agencies for behavior problems, or the parents were considering referring the child because of his behavior problems; b) at least one parent responded affirmatively to the questions, "Does your child exhibit behavior problems in the home? Is he difficult to control in the home? Would you consider him hyperactive, aggressive, or a conduct problem?" Subjects who did not meet either criteria for the Deviant sample were assigned to the Nondeviant sample. Subject recruitment continued until twelve families had been assigned to each sample. All twelve subject families originally assigned to the Nondeviant sample completed the study, whereas four of the twelve families assigned to the Deviant sample withdrew from the study before it was completed. These families were replaced by four new families who met the criteria for assignment to the Deviant sample. All twelve families in the Deviant sample met criterion b above; seven families in the Deviant sample met criterion a.

Demographic data were obtained for the 24 families who completed the study. The mean age for the target boys was 5.5 for the Deviant sample and 5.6 for the Nondeviant sample. The median number of children for families in both samples was 2 (range 1-4). The mean socioeconomic level as measured by the Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) index where 7 is the lowest and 1 is the highest was 2.9 for the Deviant sample (range 1-4) and 2.8 for the Nondeviant sample (range 2-4). Parents' median IQ as measured by the Shipley-Hartford Vocabulary Scale was 109.2 for the Deviant sample (range 93-118) and 107.6 for the Nondeviant sample (range 91-118). The Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) scores were 102 for the Deviant sample (range 49-150) and 110 for the Nondeviant sample (range 41-146). Numerical differences between the two samples on all demographic variables were nonsignificant as measured by t-test comparisons.

Procedures

Parents attended a one-hour interview in which the experimental instructions were explained. No children were present. During the interview, parents completed a 47-item rating scale describing the target child. The items, taken from a rating scale developed by Becker (1960), sampled each of five child behavior problem factors derived by Patterson and Fagot (1967). In addition, the demographic data reported above were collected at this time.

After a brief explanation of the work done at the clinic, the following experimental instructions were given the parents:

Throughout our observation of both problem children and normal children, we have wondered to what extent the parents of these children would be able to present their children as either good or bad in the home observation.

In other words, how possible would it be for you to get your child to act like a perfect little boy if you wanted to give us this impression. Or, how possible would it be for you to get your child to act like a very bad boy with many behavior problems if you wanted to give us that impression. This is the question we would like you to help us answer.

We would like to send our observers into your home just as we do for other families who come to us for help or who volunteer for research. But, in addition to asking you to give us a representative picture of you and your child, we would like you to try to give us two unrepresentative pictures. One third of the time we would like you to do whatever you can to present the best possible picture of your child. That is, do whatever you can, within reason, to present to the observer a good, nondeviant, normal, undisturbed child. Do whatever you would do if you wanted to convince the observer that you child was very good and very normal and not in need of psychological treatment. Another third of the time, we would like you to do whatever you can to present a bad picture of your child to the observer. During these periods, do whatever you can to show the observer that your child has behavior problems by getting him to exhibit undesirable behavior. In these periods, do whatever you would do if you wanted to convince the observer that your child needed psychological treatment for behavior problems. The responsibility as to whether your child behaves well or badly is your and yours only: We ask that you not tell the child or his brothers or sisters the purpose of the observations. For another third of the time, we would like you to give us a representative picture of how your child acts if you treat him as you usually do. On these nights, just act the way you normally would.

In summary, we want to see if you can influence your child to be good and influence him to be bad. The observer will not be convinced by anything you say to your child or anything you say about him. She will rate only his behavior, and your job will be to make your child behave well or behave badly. We are not sure to what degree parents are able to do this or even if they can do it at all, but we want you to try if you are willing. Finally, when you are trying to influence your child to look bad, we don't want you to do anything which you would consider to be seriously harmful to your child, or anything which you would consider bizarre or beyond the boundaries of your own common sense. In general, we don't want you to do anything which would be grossly beyond the limits of the normal range of your behaviors.

Families were asked to make the target child appear "good" on two consecutive days, "bad" on two consecutive days, and "as usual" (normal) on two consecutive days. Families in the Deviant and Nondeviant samples were randomly assigned to one of six possible orderings of the three experimental conditions (e.g., good-bad-normal, normal-good-bad, etc.). The ordering of experimental conditions was counterbalanced within both samples.

Each family was observed in their home for 45 minutes prior to dinner for six evenings. During the observations, the family was required to comply with the following rules: a) all family members present; b) no one except family members present; c) all family members restricted to a specified two-room area; d) no television; e) no interactions with the observer. These observation conditions are the same as those required of families who are in treatment or who volunteer for research at the University Psychology Clinic (e.g., Eyberg & Johnson, 1974; Johnson, et al., 1973; Wahl, Jonnson, Johansson, & Martin, 1973) or at Oregon Research Institute (e.g., Patterson,

et al., 1973; Patterson & Reid, 1973). Following each observation session, parents completed a Daily Parental Questionnaire asking them to describe how they tried to influence the target child to be "good" or "bad," how much effort they put into their attempt, and how successful they perceived their attempt to be.

After completing the six days of home observations, each parent was mailed three Final Parent Questionnaires, identical in format, except that one investigated the parents' report of their behaviors on "good" days, one on "bad" days, and one on normal days. The Final Parent Questionnaire was a series of fourteen behavioral statements paralleling the observation codes. For example, parents were asked to rate separately for each experimental condition the extent to which they "gave commands and requests to the target child." Reponse format for each question consisted of a scale from 1, "much less than usual," to 7, "much more than usual." In a previous study (Johnson & Lobitz, 1974), twelve of the fourteen items on the Final Parent Questionnaire were found to discriminate "good" days significantly from "bad" days.

Observational System

Observers used a modified version of a coding system developed by Patterson, Ray, Shaw, and Cobb (1969) which utilized 35 distinct behavior categories. Structurally, the coding involved only the target child and his interaction with one or more family members. All interactions were coded in pairs of behaviors consisting of the child's action followed by a response. For the purpose of determining observer agreement, interactions were coded sequentially within 30-second intervals. No set number of responses was

required per 30-second interval, but, in practice, between three and five interactions were recorded in each 30-second interval. When interactions were continuing, they were recorded every ten seconds.

Behavioral codes were designated as either deviant or nondeviant behavior for children. These designations were based on a previous study in which parents of children of the same age as those in this study rated each behavioral code on a scale from deviant to nondeviant (Adkins & Johnson, 1972). Using this procedure, 15 of the 35 behaviors had been designated as "deviant" for young children; the sum of these behaviors comprised the child's deviant behavior score for the present study. Deviant behavior codes were: demand attention, violation of standing command, destructiveness, high rate, humiliate, noncompliance, physical negative, smart talk, tease, tantrum, whine, yell, threatening command, ignore, and negativism. For the present study, the 35 behavioral codes were also divided a priori into three categories of parental consequences: positive, negative, and neutral. The investigators based these categories on assumptions about the parent's intended communication to the child. For example, if a parental consequence was coded as disapprove, it was assumed to convey a negative communication to the child. The face validity of categorization is enhanced by evidence that behaviors which are deviant and/or negative produce a relatively high proportion of negative consequences (Adkins & Johnson, 1972; Johnson, et al., 1973). Negative consequence codes were threatening command, command negative (terminating), violation of standing command, disapprove, destructiveness, humiliate, ignore, noncompliance, negativism, physical negative, smart talk, tease, tantrum, whine, yell, and demand attention.

Positive consequence codes were approval, attend, compliance, indulgence, laugh, non-verbal activity, physical positive, receive, talk, and touch.

Observers

Observers were young female research assistants. They had been trained extensively in the use of the code before being employed for this study, and they continued to train throughout the study. The observations for this particular study were done in the context of a larger research project in which many children and families were being observed for several concurrent investigations. In all of this research, observers were kept uninformed regarding the specific purpose of any given observation. Following each observation session, observers completed a 44-item questionnaire assessing their perception of the family and its interaction. Imbedded in this questionnaire was an item asking whether the parents appeared to be trying to present a good or bad picture of their child. Responses to this item indicated that the observers were unaware of the parents' attempts to present a socially desirable or undesirable picture of their child during any given observation.

Results

Parent Perception of Child

As a check on the independent variable deviant-nondeviant, *t*-tests comparing sample means were calculated on the three factors related to child behavior problems from the Bipolar Adjective Checklist (Becker, 1960): "relaxed disposition," "lack of aggression," and "conduct problems." The Nondeviant children were perceived as more relaxed ($t = 4.18$, $df = 22$, $p < .002$), less aggressive ($t = 5.75$, $df = 22$, $p < .001$), and less of a conduct problem ($t = 3.38$, $df = 22$, $p < .005$, all tests two-tailed), as compared to the Deviant children.

Observer Agreement

Seventeen of the twenty-four sets of observations were checked for observer agreement by sending an additional observer into the home on one randomly determined day. Correlations between the two observers' scores on each dependent variable were computed across families. The two observers' scores correlated .95 for child deviant behaviors, .91 for parental negative behaviors, and .98 for parental commands.

Observational Data

Dependent variable scores were expressed as a proportion of the total amount of the subject's behavior and were transformed to arc-sin scores for purposes of data analysis. Hypotheses were tested by a two-factor analysis of variance with repeated measures on one factor and by t-tests for paired observations. Reported alpha levels were for directional hypotheses.

The means for the proportion of child deviant behavior across samples and across conditions are presented in Figure 1. Overall differences between

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Insert Figure 1 About Here

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experimental conditions were significant ($F = 17.13$, $df = 2, 44$, $p < .001$); whereas, the differences between samples and the interaction between samples and conditions were not ($F = 2.28$ for sample effect, $F < 1$ for interaction effect). Nondeviant children showed more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition ($t = 4.10$, $df = 11$, $p < .001$) and slightly less deviant behavior under the "good" condition ($t = 1.35$, $df = 11$, $p < .10$) as compared to the normal condition. Deviant children showed more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition as compared to normal ($t = 3.31$, $df = 11$, $p < .005$); whereas, their "good" and normal conditions did not differ significantly ($t = .52$,

df = 11, ns). Children in both samples showed more deviant behavior under the "bad" condition than under the "good" condition (t = 3.79, df = 11, p < .005 for the Nondeviant sample; t = 2.92, df = 11, p < .01 for the Deviant sample).

Examination of the data for individual children showed that not all families in either sample were able to influence their child in the desired direction. A minimum of one percentage point was established as a conservative criterion of change from the normal condition; the results indicated that seven out of twelve families in the Nondeviant sample were able to influence their child to appear "good"; whereas, only four out of twelve families in the Deviant sample achieved the criterion. Ten out of twelve Nondeviant families and nine out of twelve Deviant families reached the criterion for influencing their child to appear "bad."

Figure 2 contains the means for the proportion of parent negative

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Insert Figure 2 About Here

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behaviors across samples and conditions. Overall differences between experimental conditions were significant (F = 20.98, df = 2,44, p < .001); whereas, overall differences between samples and the interactions between samples and conditions were not (F < 1 for both effects). Nondeviant parents gave more negative responses under the "bad" condition (t = 2.66, df = 11, p < .025) and fewer negative responses under the "good" condition (t = 3.81, df = 11, p < .005), as compared to the normal condition. Deviant parents gave more negative responses under the "bad" condition as compared to normal (t = 2.98 df = 11, p < .01); whereas, their "good" and normal conditions did not differ significantly (t = .68, df = 11, ns). Parents in both samples gave more

negative responses under the "bad" condition than under the "good" condition (t = 4.55, df = 11, p < .001 for the Nondeviant sample; t = 3.77, df = 11, p < .005 for the Deviant sample).

Figure 3 contains the means for the proportion of parent commands across

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Insert Figure 3 About Here

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samples and conditions. Overall differences between conditions were significant (F = 6.48, df = 2, 44, p < .01); whereas, differences between samples and the interactions between samples and conditions were not (F < 1 for both effects). Nondeviant parents gave fewer commands under the "good" condition as compared to normal (t = 2.71, df = 11, p < .025), but their "bad" and normal conditions did not differ significantly (t = .90, df = 11, ns). Deviant parents gave slightly more commands under the "bad" condition as compared to normal (t = 1.47, df = 11, p < .10); whereas, their "good" and normal conditions did not differ significantly (t = .34, df = 11, ns). Parents in both samples gave more commands under the "bad" condition than under the "good" condition (t = 3.30, df = 11, p < .005 for the Nondeviant sample; t = 1.84, df = 11, p < .05 for the Deviant sample).

Table 1 contains the rank order correlations of the changes in child

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Insert Table 1 About Here

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deviant behavior with the changes in parent behaviors computed across families. In the Nondeviant sample, changes in child deviant behavior from the normal to the "good" condition were positively related to changes in parent negativeness (Spearman r_s = .60, p < .05) and negatively related to changes in parent

positiveness (r_s = -.90, p < .001). Changes in child deviant behavior from the normal to the "bad" condition were positively related to parent commanding (r_s = .62, p < .05).

In the Deviant sample, changes in child deviant behavior from the normal to the "good" condition were positively related to parent negativeness (r_s = .78, p < .01). In addition, there was a nonsignificant negative relationship between changes in parent positiveness and changes in child deviant behavior (r_s = -.50, p < .10). From the normal to the "bad" condition, changes in child deviant behavior were positively related to parent negativeness (r_s = .72, p < .01) and nonsignificantly related to parent commanding (r_s = .57, p < .10).

Questionnaire Data

Parents in both samples reported that they were generally more positive under the "good" condition and more negative under the "bad" condition as compared to the normal condition. Results for each item of the Final Parent Questionnaire are contained in Table 2. On the Daily Parent Questionnaires,

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Insert Table 2 About Here
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parents in both samples reported a nonsignificant tendency to expend more effort in the "good" and "bad" conditions as compared to normal. Both samples reported that they were more successful in influencing their child to be "good" than in influencing him to be "bad." This difference was significant at the .01 level for both samples. However, as can be seen from Figure 1, the parents' perception of success in influencing their children was contradicted by the observation data.

Discussion

Child Behavior

As predicted, Nondeviant parents manipulated their child's deviant behavior in a socially undesirable ("bad") direction (hypothesis a). Their manipulation of their child's deviant behavior in a socially desirable direction ("good") was as predicted, but was short of statistical significance ($p < .10$). Deviant parents were able to influence their child's deviant behavior only in a socially undesirable direction (hypothesis b). Contrary to their parents' perceptions, children in both groups showed greater changes in a socially undesirable than in a socially desirable direction. As predicted, both groups achieved significant differences in their child's deviant behavior between the "good" and "bad" condition (hypothesis d). This result directly replicated the finding of Johnson and Lobitz (1974) on a nondeviant sample and extended this finding to a deviant sample as well.

Hypothesis c, predicting between group differences from the normal to the "good" condition, was not supported. Although there appeared to be a slightly greater reduction in child deviant behavior for the Nondeviant sample than for the Deviant sample (Figure 1), the direction of effect was similar for both groups, and the interaction was not significant. The large variability in observational data and the small number of families per group may have precluded the discovery of a between-group difference, if one existed. Failure to find a difference may also have been a function of the subject selection criteria. Since children in the Deviant sample were not actually in treatment, but were merely labeled "deviant" by at least one parent, they may not have been as difficult to manipulate in a socially

desirable direction as children for whom parents have already sought professional assistance. However, the present data do not reveal differences between the two samples on this variable.

Parent Behavior

As predicted, Nondeviant parents gave significantly more negative responses under the "bad" condition and significantly fewer negative responses under the "good" condition as compared to the normal condition. They gave fewer commands under the "good" condition, but their commanding did not differ significantly between the "bad" and normal conditions. As predicted, Deviant parents gave significantly more negative responses and commands under the "bad" condition as compared to normal, whereas their "good" and normal conditions did not differ for these variables. Parents in both samples gave more negative responses and commands under the "bad" condition than under the "good" condition. As shown in Table 1, changes in parent behaviors correlated with changes in child behaviors.

In the Nondeviant sample, an unexpected variable, parent positiveness was significantly correlated with changes in the child's deviant behavior from the normal to the "good" condition. This relationship was significantly greater in the Nondeviant sample ($r_s = -.90$) than in the Deviant sample ($r_s = -.50$; Fisher's $\bar{z} = 1.97$, $p < .05$, two-tailed). Thus, although changes in Deviant children's deviant behavior were related primarily to changes in their parents' negativeness (Table 1), Nondeviant children's changes were related to a variety of parent behaviors. Parent positiveness, and secondarily parent negativeness, were related to socially desirable changes in child deviant behavior, whereas parent commands were significantly related to

socially undesirable changes for the Nondeviant sample. These results are generally consistent with previous findings that deviant children are not responsive to adult-dispensed positive social stimuli (Patterson, 1965; Patterson, et al., 1967; Phillips, 1968; Wahler, 1969), and respond more deviantly to negative social stimuli (Raush, 1965). In addition, the present study suggests that deviant and nondeviant children may differ in the range of parent behaviors to which they respond.[2] In particular, for nondeviant children, positive parent behaviors may have a greater impact on socially desirable changes in child behavior than for deviant children.

Methodological Concerns

Taken together, these results support the view that parents can bias home observations of their child by manipulating him to appear socially undesirable and that many nondeviant parents may be able to manipulate their child to appear socially desirable. Thus, the possible distortion of data in previous naturalistic observation studies needs to be considered. As the present study has shown, the data may be greatly distorted from "normal" where parents are operating under a response set to make their child appear socially undesirable. However, when data from the same laboratory are compared with data collected in the present study, the percentages of child and parent behavior are most comparable to that found in the "good" and normal conditions. For example, in comparing children referred for treatment and a matched nonreferred sample, Lobitz and Johnson (1974) found that nonreferred children exhibited an average of 4% deviant behavior, whereas referred children exhibited 7% deviant behavior during home observations. Similarly, they found that parents of nonreferred children exhibited 3% negative behaviors whereas

parents in the referred sample exhibited an average of 5% negative behaviors to their child (cf., Figures 1 and 2). These differences were significant to the .01 level. Comparable amounts of deviant behavior have been found by independent investigators using similar observation systems (e.g., Hendriks, 1972; Miller, Auerback, Amundsen, & Gottlieb, 1974; Shaw, 1971). It is not possible to draw post hoc conclusions about the parents' response sets during any of the above investigations. However, the results of the present study suggest that if any response set was operating during the above investigations, it was probably a socially desirable one, from which only minimal distortion of the data would have been likely to occur.

Insofar as there is a potential for any distortion by parent response sets, the generalizability of naturalistic data will remain open to question. Several approaches to this problem have been discussed at length elsewhere (Johnson & Bolstad, 1973). One suggested approach would provide convergent validation for naturalistic data by broadening the range of measures used to investigate given questions. A second approach would attempt to eliminate the problem by reducing the obtrusiveness of the observations.

However, it is unrealistic to assume that subject response bias can be eliminated completely from naturalistic studies. The potential for parents to manipulate their child in socially desirable or undesirable directions can be viewed, not as a methodological impediment, but as a controlable dependent variable. Home observations of children might well include both "good" and normal conditions, especially where the observations are used to evaluate family treatment programs. Pre-post treatment observations under both conditions would determine not only the overall reduction in deviant behavior (as in Eyberg & Johnson, 1974; Patterson, et al., 1973), but also changes in

the parents' ability to influence their child's behavior. Where investigators are concerned about the upper limits of a child's deviant behavior, the "bad" condition should also be included.

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Footnotes

[1]This research was based on a doctoral dissertation by the first author and was supported by a National Institute of Mental Health Grant MH 19633 to the second author. Request for reprints should be addressed to the authors, Psychology Clinic, University of Oregon, Eugene, 97403.

[2]In general, correlations between parent and child behavior changes do not permit conclusions about the direction of effect (Bell, 1968). However, since the independent variable in the present study was an instructional set given to the parents, it was assumed that the principal direction of effect was from parent to child. Empirical confirmation of this assumption would depend on a replication of the present study in which children were given instructions to modify their parents' positive, negative, and commanding behaviors.

Table 1

Spearman Rank Order Correlations Between Changes in Parent Behaviors and Changes in Child Deviant Behavior

Child Deviant Behavior:	With Parent Negativeness	With Parent Commands	With Parent Positiveness
Nondeviant Sample:			
Normal to "Good" Condition	.60**	-.22	-.90****
Normal to "Bad" Condition	.40	.62**	.22
Deviant Sample:			
Normal to "Good" Condition	.78***	-.15	-.50*
Normal to "Bad" Condition	.72***	.57*	-.46

* $p < .10$
** $p < .05$
*** $p < .01$
**** $p < .001$

Table 2

Results of Final Parent Questionnaire

Questionnaire Item	"Good" Condition		"Bad" Condition	
	Deviant Sample	Nondeviant Sample	Deviant Sample	Nondeviant Sample
1. Gave commands to child	less* (.001)**	less (ns)	more (.001)	more (.001)
2. Restricted child's activities	less (.001)	less (ns)	more (.001)	more (.001)
3. Expressed disapproval of child's activities	less (.001)	less (.05)	more (.001)	more (.001)
4. Yelled at child	less (.001)	less (.025)	more (.001)	more (.05)
5. Paid attention to child	more (.001)	more (.001)	less (.001)	less (.001)
6. Ignored child	less (.01)	less (.01)	more (ns)	more (.05)
7. Was physically negative to child (e.g., slap, spank)	less (.01)	less (ns)	more (ns)	more (ns)
8. Was physically positive to child	more (.001)	more (ns)	less (.001)	less (.001)
9. Expressed approval of child's activities	more (.001)	more (.01)	less (.001)	less (.001)
10. Did what child asked me to do	more (.01)	more (.01)	less (.001)	less (.001)
11. Teased or embarrassed child	less (.05)	less (ns)	more (.001)	more (.001)
12. Talked to child	more (.001)	more (.001)	less (.001)	less (.001)
13. Was generally positive to child	more (.001)	more (.001)	less (.001)	less (.001)
14. Was generally negative to child	less (.001)	less (.001)	more (.001)	more (.001)

*as compared with Normal condition
**p values for nondirectional F-test (df = 1,92)

Figure 1

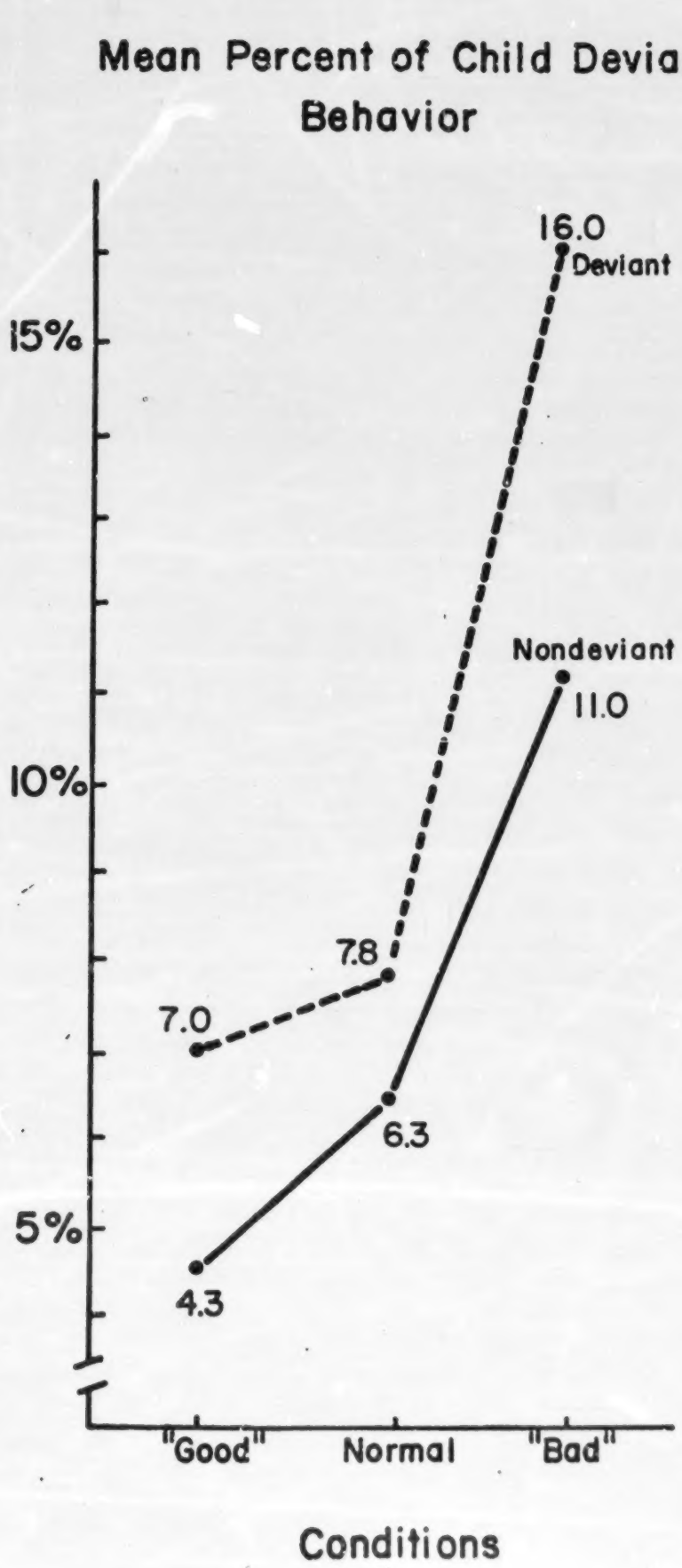

Mean Percent of Child Deviant Behavior
16.0
Deviant
15%
Nondeviant
11.0
10%
7.8
7.0
6.3
5%
4.3
"Good"
Normal
"Bad"
Conditions

Figure 2

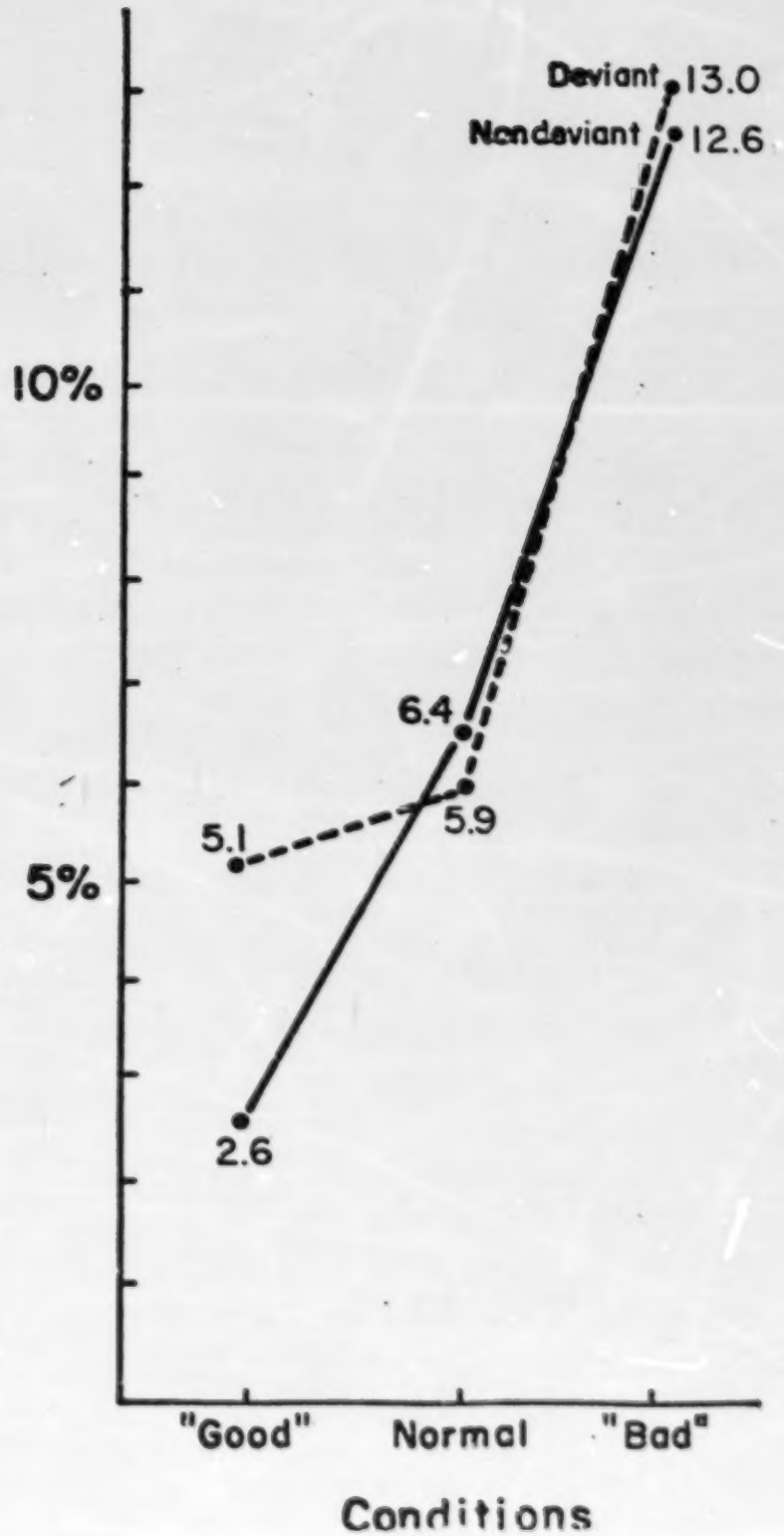
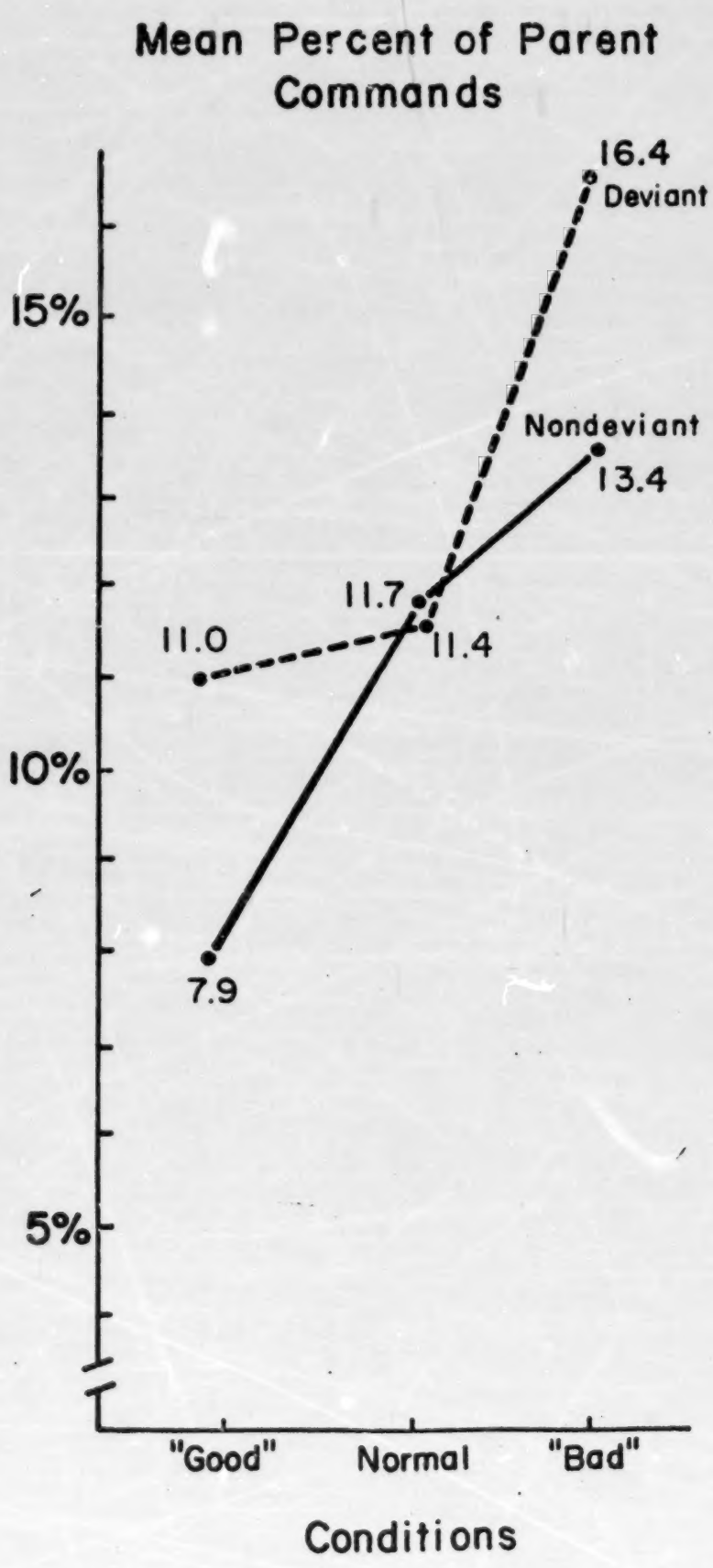

Mean Percent of Parent
Negative Behavior
Deviant
13.0
Nondeviant
12.6
10%
6.4
5.9
5.1
5%
2.6
"Good"
Normal
"Bad"
Conditions

Figure 3


Mean Percent of Parent Commands
16.4
Deviant
15%
Nondeviant
13.4
11.7
11.0
11.4
10%
7.9
5%
"Good"
Normal
"Bad"
Conditions